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ABSTRACT

In school reform studies little attention has been paid to context, i.e., the structures, standards, norms, and practices that enable and encourage teachers to do their best work. In contrast, this study concentrates on the workplace (the school) as it is experienced by teachers: physical setting and resources; organizational structures; relationships among colleagues, clients, and superiors; influence in governance; cultural norms and traditions; opportunities for learning and growth; and the role of pay and incentives. The sample of 115 teachers, drawn from a pool of teachers recommended by their principals as being above average, includes 75 from public schools, 20 from independent schools, and 20 from church-related schools in eastern Massachusetts. The 11 chapters cover the following topics: (1) a broad look at work and workplaces; (2) introduction to the respondents; (3) the politics of space and supplies; (4) the importance of close home-school relationships; (5) the bureaucratic structures of public schools and their unsuitability for teaching and learning; (6) teachers' isolation and ways of promoting collegiality; (7) teachers and governance; (8) lessons from private schools on the importance of building community and nurturing values, traditions, and norms; (9) promotion of the learning and growth of teachers; (10) teacher salaries; and (11) school reform in light of the study findings, outlining the features of a model workplace, proposing policies, and analyzing necessary changes in attitudes and roles. An appendix explains the methodology and supplies a sample interview guide. (AMH)

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